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Percy calls for high-level official at arms curb talks

By John Maclean
Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON—Sen. Charles Percy (R., Ill.) called on the Reagan administration Tuesday to send Secretary of State George Shultz or his deputy, Kenneth Dam, to Geneva to break the current deadlock in nuclear arms control talks with the Russians.

Percy said in addition to sending a new high-level negotiator the Reagan administration should provide "more flexibility" to Paul Nitze, the permanent negotiator in charge of the European theater nuclear weapons negotiations.

He praised Nitze's efforts in the past to explore possible solutions with his Russian counterpart in Geneva, a move which brought a rebuke from the White House at the time.

Percy said that efforts to get an agreement have been blocked so far by "stonewallers" within the Reagan administration.

"They don't want any agreement," he said. "They are people in the Defense Department, the National Security Council and even the State Department. They prevail sometimes."

PERCY MADE HIS remarks to a group of newsmen at a breakfast here. Asked to name the "stonewallers," he declined. "You know who the stonewallers are," he said.

Asked if he counted President Reagan as one, Percy said, "No sir, the Feb. 22 speech changed that." Reagan made a speech Feb. 22 outlining four conditions for what he considered a good arms control agreement.

Reagan said there should be equality of missiles, there should be verifiability, there should be no counting of British and French independent nuclear forces and there should be no shifting of Soviet missiles from European to Asian targets.

Percy has called upon Reagan to devise an "interim solution" in the arms control talks, a position that would be a stepping stone on the way to the administration's goal of "zero option," which means withdrawal of Soviet SS-20 missiles in return for non-deployment of U.S. Pershing 2 and cruise missiles.

Percy said a new high-level negotiator could inject new life into the ongoing talks. He said Shultz and Dam, whom he has known personally for many years, are two of the best negotiators he has ever seen.

ASKED IF THE chief U.S. strategic arms negotiator, retired Lt. Gen. Edward Rowny, had lost his credibility as a negotiator due to disclosure of his "hit list" of arms control officials, Percy said no.

"It makes it more difficult," said Percy. The hit list, naming members of his own delegation wanting an arms deal "at any cost," was delivered by the State Department to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which Percy is chairman, on Monday. It is available to committee members on a classified basis.

Percy indicated Rowny still has great value as a negotiator with the Senate, should the Reagan administration come up with a treaty.

"He does have the influence with the U.S. Senate necessary to make up a two-thirds vote," Percy said, referring to the majority needed to ratify a treaty. The SALT II treaty never achieved Senate ratification, although its terms are being observed by the Reagan administration.

Percy indicated that Rowny, who was a leading SALT II critic and has many ties to those who campaigned against that treaty, could deflect criticism of a new treaty when it came to Capitol Hill.

ON OTHER MATTERS, Percy predicted the Senate will approve the White House request for an additional $110 million in aid for El Salvador.

He said he expects many conditions will be attached, but he said the best argument for the aid is that those Salvadoran army troops who have received U.S. training have performed far better than the rest of the army in combat and in the field of human rights.

He said the rejection of the electoral process in El Salvador announced by several leftist guerrilla leaders has hurt their cause with Congress.

"They have shown their hand and they want no part of elections," Percy said. "They want to shoot their way into the government."

Percy said the Congress will insist on international oversight of the El Salvadoran elections, scheduled for December.

On the Middle East, Percy said the stalemate in negotiations over Lebanon gives the appearance that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin is stalling in order to avoid dealing with President Reagan's broader proposals for peace in the Mideast.

"WE HAVE NOT MADE progress in these talks," Percy said. He said Israel was putting forward "impossible conditions" which could not be met, "giving the appearance of slowness of progress."

On the Russians, Percy urged a summit between Reagan and Soviet Leader Yuri Andropov even before an arms treaty is ready to be signed.

He said that he met Monday with a Soviet arms delegation and it appears to him the Soviets are the ones now dragging their feet over a summit.

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